

FRIST has my cooperation and support in doing this.

Our willingness to resolve the Democratic concerns speaks for itself by virtue of where this bill stands today. I again thank Senators FRIST and SPECTER for their willingness to help resolve some of the difficult issues on this legislation and, of course, the cosponsors as well.

Let me talk about the final issues. Even though we made all of these changes that show up here, I understand some want to make further changes, including streamlining the claims process even more. I have said I am willing to look at such proposals, but the time has come and the time is past to wrap up this process. It passed out of the committee last summer and we need to stop talking and do something. With all of this whining about jobs that all of us want to get in this country, this bill would do more to create jobs and solidify our economy than any other bill we can pass this year. This bill makes sense except for how costly it is, but even then we are willing to do that. This is why we need to continue working for the next several weeks on the issues and sit down in a 2-day meeting sometime in the last half of March to see if we can finally get agreement on all of the issues.

I thank Senator SPECTER and Judge Becker for their valuable assistance. I was not really happy because we had gone through so much and I had commitments from so many people if we got to \$108 billion, this bill would go and they would support it. I got it to \$108 billion—and I think they thought

we could not do it—and they said we have to have more and more and more. We are giving them more, even.

I also appreciate the willingness of Senator SPECTER and Judge Becker to help finally resolve these issues in a 2-day session. My friends, Senators LEAHY, DODD, and DASCHLE, have been graciously willing to sit down with us at a staff level to narrow the differences and I am confident they will be willing to join in this 2-day meeting as well. We are willing to accommodate schedules to get full participation in this meeting within a reasonable fashion.

We simply cannot delay any longer. We need to ensure the truly sick get paid and paid in a timely manner. We need to provide stability to our economy by stemming the rampant litigation that resulted in a tidal wave of bankruptcies and stop endangering jobs and pensions through the current broken system. This crisis reaches far and wide and it hurts everyone.

What is happening with these bad acting personal injury lawyers who have been handling some of these cases, they forum-shop the cases into jurisdictions where juries go wild and judges support them and judges are in the pocket of the plaintiffs' lawyers. In one case, if I recall it correctly, five people, not one of whom experienced a sick day up to that time, got \$125 million, while thousands and thousands of very sick people get nothing. That is wrong.

For anybody to keep supporting that process the way some have done is wrong. That is why I am here on the

floor to challenge all of our colleagues to work together in good faith, put our differences aside and let's get this bill done in the best interests of our country and the best interests of jobs. If that is not done, I would not listen to one "mouthing" word from people on jobs because they are playing politics rather than doing the art of the doable, doing what needs to be done, what must be done in the interests of the sick people, the truly sick people and, I might add, many others who did not get their sickness from asbestos, but we give them the benefit of the doubt.

This bill really will work even though I have to admit it is very tough on the companies that have to come up with this \$114 billion.

I yield the floor.

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#### ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 9:30 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 6:36 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, March 4, 2004, at 9:30 a.m.

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#### NOMINATIONS

Executive nomination received by the Senate March 3, 2004:

##### ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

BENJAMIN GRUMBLES, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE AN ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, VICE GEORGE TRACY MEHAN, III, RESIGNED.